

**African Union
African Academy
of Languages
(ACALAN)**

**Implementing the
Language Plan of
Action for Africa
(ILPAA)**

**Panafrican Master's and PhD Project in African languages
and Applied Linguistics
(PAMAPAL)**

Revised 16 December 2005

Background¹

The idea of developing a Panafrican Master's and PhD program in African Languages and Applied Linguistics stemmed from discussions among a network of African language scholars on the "intellectualization" of African languages, that is, the gradual use of these languages in secondary and tertiary education as well as in other high-status functions. These discussions evolved into what is now the project for "Implementing the Language Plan of Action for Africa" (ILPAA)², which was adopted in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in February 2004. ACALAN is the African Union's technical institution charged with coordinating and assisting member states with the development and implementation of language policy and language-related programs on the continent³.

The aim of PAMAPAL is to train qualified linguists, language professionals, educators and other practitioners to become specialized in African languages and the application of relevant linguistic theory in the resolution of the issues and challenges that arise in the implementation of status, corpus and acquisition planning connected with the intellectualization project. In this regard, we are especially concerned about the facilitation and establishment of mother tongue-based bi/multilingual educational systems on the continent. As in most other regions of the world, African culture in general and African languages in particular are also threatened by the current trend of globalization, manifested in, among other phenomena, the global hegemony of English. The role of African universities in this context is to ensure that the languages of the people are appropriately positioned in all domains of life. If African languages are to be strengthened in order to be one of the decisive features of the African renaissance and of the "African century" (with all that this implies in social, economic and political terms), a dedicated, competent corps of language professionals has to be created and consolidated in the course of the next ten years, more or less.

In the sections that follow, the form and content of the program and all essential features of its delivery are described in detail.

Description of the program

PAMAPAL is envisioned at the Masters⁴ and the PhD levels. The MA program will comprise two parts, viz. the course work and the thesis. The course work component will consist of a compulsory core course that constitutes 40% of the total

¹ The evolution of colonial and post-colonial language policy and practice in the different regions of Africa has been the subject of numerous detailed scholarly reports and studies. For reasons of space, this knowledge is taken as given here. For recent studies of these issues, see, among others, Bamgbose 2002 and Laitin

² A brief description of ILPAA is given in Alexander 2004. This is a succinct history of ACALAN and its related activities in the context of the African Renaissance.. See Appendix 2.

³ The statutes (constitution) of ACALAN are appended. See Appendix 1.

⁴ Depending on the context, the actual degree may be conferred as an MA, MPhil, MEd or even MSc.

course, and several electives. Candidates will be required to complete two of these successfully. Students will be required to complete the program within 24 months.

It is envisaged that the MA program will formally begin in the fall of 2006 (October) while the PhD program will be inaugurated in 2007/08. Initially, only students who are graduates of the corresponding MA program will be enrolled in this PhD program.

PAMAPAL is professionally oriented and geared towards specialization in various sub-disciplines of Applied Linguistics in relation to African languages.

Compulsory Core Course (3 modules = 40 % of total)

1. Introduction to Linguistics and Applied Language Studies (25% of total = 62.5% of core course)
2. History and classification of language in Africa (5% of total = 12.5% of core course)
3. Sociology of Language and Language Planning (10% of total = 25% of core course)

Example of Module 3: Sociology of Language and Language Planning

Course overview: This course will focus on the relationship between language and society, and will cover macro-level features of language policy and language (status, corpus, acquisition) planning. These aspects of language planning will also be explored at implementation level in other modules.

1. Language and power, including the role of language in the economy
2. Language, culture and identity
3. Language, ethnicity, racism and sexism, with special reference to African examples
4. Language policy and social change, including the study of language attitudes
5. Language, culture and curriculum change
6. "Intellectualising" African languages
7. Indigenous knowledge systems and their critique

Electives (60% of total)

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Language in education | 6. Human Language Technology |
| 2. Literacy studies | 7. Computational Linguistics |
| 3. Translation and Interpreting | 8. Materials development |
| 4. Terminology and Terminography | 9. Language in the media |
| 5. Lexicography | 10. Sign language(s) |

Example of Elective 1: Language in education = 3 modules

Language-in-education policy and planning

Course overview: This course provides a critical examination of mother-tongue//bilingual education and includes:

1. The relation of language policy to curriculum
2. Typologies and evaluation of mother tongue, bilingual and multilingual policies and programs;
3. Longitudinal studies and case studies, especially from Africa;
4. Implications for implementation such as policy/program design; provisioning/costing of teacher education and textbook and learning support materials
5. Policy/program evaluation

Language and literacy learning in multilingual settings

Course overview: The emphasis in this course is on language and literacy learning. Its focus is on developing understandings of how young children learn and the theoretical and other significant aspects of language and literacy learning that underpin the effective teaching of pre-school and primary school aged children in a range of settings. Themes include

1. (Bi-)literacy development and (additional) language learning
2. Social and Pedagogic issues in (bi-)literacy development
3. Developing environments conducive to literacy learning, including: theoretical and practical considerations for materials development and translation
4. Current critiques of first and additional language learning and acquisition theories; language and cognition.

Implementation of mother–tongue–based bilingual education in classrooms

Course overview: This course examines in practical detail classroom and management issues affecting the use of home and additional languages as languages of teaching and as subjects, including

1. Language-across-the-curriculum
2. Approaches to teaching methods
3. Bilingual and biliteracy classroom practices
4. Teachers' participation in developing and adapting learning support materials
5. Teachers' participation in terminology development and use
6. Assessment of learners in bilingual/multilingual learning environments.
7. Teachers as researchers
8. Intercultural communication in the classroom

Mode of delivery

Where will the program be offered?

The Masters program will be offered as from October 2006 at nine campuses initially. These are: Ibadan and Bamako (West Africa); Yaoundé and Malawi (Central Africa); Addis Ababa (North Africa); Dar es Salaam and Nairobi (East Africa); Cape Town and Eduardo Mondlane (Southern Africa). After a pilot phase of four years (or less if this turns out to be appropriate), the program will gradually be extended and adapted to other universities in the respective regions.

PAMAPAL will normally be based in the Departments of African Languages and/or Linguistics in the various universities involved. It may start as an appended program to a given Department, but it should gradually evolve into an integral part of the Department. This means that PAMAPAL should gradually become an integral part of the African universities involved. To reach this goal, it will be necessary for ACALAN, on behalf of the African Union, to negotiate and sign appropriate agreements with these universities. Such agreements should, among other things, provide practical mechanisms for the gradual extension of PAMAPAL from lead universities to other universities. In this context, the Association of African Universities (AAU) is expected to play a guiding role. Ultimately, all African universities will become involved.

Who will teach on the program?

PAMAPAL is an interdisciplinary program. The teaching staff will be drawn from qualified university staff in Linguistics, Education, African languages, Computer Science and related fields. They will be regular staff of their respective universities or associate staff brought into the program on the basis of their acknowledged outstanding qualification and practice. Course work will be designed and coordinated for all the sites by the best-qualified specialist scholars on the continent. Where it is appropriate, these scholars themselves as well as specialists from outside the continent will present material in lectures or seminars.

PAMAPAL is a continent-wide African program. Thus, its core content will be the same in all the universities involved. Consequently, the ensuing degrees will bear the same value in all African countries. In order to enhance coherence and to create a unique *esprit de corps*, it is envisaged that all students enrolled in a PAMAPAL degree course in any particular year will gather for a two-weeks period at one of the participating universities during that year in order to meet with all participating lecturing and supervisory staff in a teach-in situation involving lectures, seminars, workshops, face-to-face sessions on thesis topics and possible supervisors, and to discuss common issues, exchange new methods, suggest changes in the program, initiate research, etc. This practice will ensure that there is as much commonality as

possible in the approach to the subject and an evenness of quality across the sites. It will also give all the students on the program the opportunity to get to know the specialists in their field and to find the most relevant supervisors or co-supervisors for their dissertations.

As in the case of other core programs of ACALAN, overall continental coordination of PAMAPAL will be undertaken from one of the regional centers. The University of Yaoundé 1 in Cameroon will undertake this important task in the case of PAMAPAL. Initially, at least four chairs of Applied Linguistics will have to be endowed for a five- to seven-year period in order to ensure that the program can run smoothly at the universities concerned⁵. The six chairs are meant to guarantee the highest level of excellence and prestige of the program within academic milieus. The incumbents will be well-known professors whose achievements in African languages and Applied Linguistics can serve as models on the continent.

Students' profile

PAMAPAL is intended to produce a cadre of competent professionals in all domains pertaining to the promotion, development and use of African languages on the continent. Candidates for the MA program should have done a major in at least one African language for their first degree. This requirement is so important that in order to assist potential candidates who might not satisfy it, an accelerated preparatory course in General Linguistics or in the Linguistics of African Languages will be designed and taught at the relevant sites from the beginning of the program. This provision will be geared to accommodate especially those candidates who are involved in Education and who have, generally speaking, not focused their earlier studies on Linguistics as a discipline.

Initially, not more than ten students per region/university will be accommodated on the program. By the time students complete the course work in the program, they should be able to choose a research topic in one of the sub-disciplines for their theses. It is crucial that thesis research be useful or relevant to specific African language communities, countries or regions of the continent.

To encourage students to enter and to persevere in this field, bursaries will be awarded on a regional basis according to the availability of funds. It is hoped that we will be able to ask governments committed to development projects in specific African countries to set aside annually the small amounts that would be necessary to support a few students from those countries to participate in the PAMAPAL program for two years in each case. PRAESA's experience with its Training of Trainers Program for Educators in Multilingual Settings in southern Africa (TOTSA) during the past four years has shown that such an approach is perfectly viable.

⁵ This question is detailed in the appended budget proposal.

During the first years of the MA program, particular attention will be paid to Applied Computational Linguistics and the effective use of African languages in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). This will help students use ICTs to solve some of the most urgent problems in the discipline of Applied Linguistics as it pertains to the study and use of African languages⁶.

Career opportunities for successful candidates

The development and teaching of African languages offers today great and fast growing career opportunities. Even in a country with over 250 languages like Cameroon, this is becoming increasingly evident. For instance, in the private education sector, the authorities of the Catholic and Protestant Education systems, who have associated with the PROPELCA program (Operational Program for Language Education in Cameroon), have expressed the need for specialized personnel in African languages and Applied Linguistics to assist them in mother tongue teaching projects, particularly:

- Mother tongue teacher trainers for nursery and primary schools;
- Secondary school teachers of African languages;
- Designers of teaching/literacy materials.

Recent developments in government language policy in many African states, ranging from Ethiopia in the north to Mozambique and Madagascar in the south are also very encouraging. By way of a convenient example, the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon recognizes the role of indigenous languages in preserving and enhancing a national cultural heritage and national development. The law laying down guidelines for education in Cameroon that followed two years later (Law No. 98/004 of 14 April 1998) has as one of its objectives, the promotion of the teaching of Cameroonian national languages in schools. This was followed by a presidential decree in 2002 creating, among other structures, provincial inspectorates of national languages. In the Ministry of Youth and Animation, indigenous Cameroonian languages are recognized as the most appropriate media of communication and literacy in rural animation and development programs. Many more examples from other West, East and southern African countries can be cited to demonstrate the revision of language policy and practice that is slowly but surely taking place on the entire continent. The palpable failure of post-colonial education for the masses of the people is without any doubt one of the main causes of this policy review, even if it is not always referred to in these terms.

Many other African countries, including “francophone” ones such as Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, are making impressive progress in developing and teaching their local languages. In order to ensure the effective implementation of the emerging

⁶ Some of these issues are discussed critically in a recent review edited by Makoni and Meinhof (2003).

forward-looking and appropriate language policy frameworks, there is an urgent need to train personnel who will provide the required technical know-how..

In all these cases, there is a clear and crying need to go to scale. The numerous NGOs, CBOs and university-based initiatives that have, as it were, carried the flag of mother tongue-based bilingual education, are by definition incapable of initiating or sustaining any massification program. Hence, governments, NGOs, the private sector and foreign donors will have to be bound into the structural architecture of the ACALAN programs, especially into this crucial PAMAPAL.

Conclusion

PAMAPAL has to be assessed in terms of the entire program for the renewal and reinvigoration of the African continent after the disasters of the 1970s and the 1990s. The political project of the African Union, the economic project of NEPAD and the cultural dimension of the “African Renaissance” are all clearly linked. Of course, the relative autonomy of the different aspects is an important consideration, since the success of the project for the promotion and maintenance of cultural and linguistic diversity cannot be said to be determined by the success or failure of NEPAD, for example. However, the degree of mutual influence is very high. For this reason, it is vital that PAMAPAL as one of the central programs of ACALAN has to be seen as both integral to the democratization and development dimensions and vital to the diversity dimension. Without the trained and competent professionals, trainers and practitioners, the ACALAN project is a non-starter.

It is also important to realize that although most of what has to be done is necessarily determined and circumscribed by the realities of the African condition, the issues that have to be addressed are not different in principle from similar issues in other highly multilingual settings such as that of the European Union or of most Asian countries. As a consequence, we are committed to joint explorations with non-African scholars and language activists of decisive questions and approaches to Applied Linguistics and language studies. Indeed, the African diaspora is expected to play a very significant role in assisting scholars and other relevant actors on the continent. It is hoped that the recent special emphasis put on applied computational linguistics in the ACALAN core projects with the participation of Unesco’s Economic Council for Africa, will bring a supplementary impetus to the program as a whole.

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